



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

23 September, 2021

The Honorable Denis McDonough  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

Thank you for your steadfast leadership in serving veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we recognize all the hard work of VA employees to serve the nation's veterans during this difficult time, many of our constituents have experienced delays in accessing necessary care from VA's community providers. We should not be seeing these problems to the extent we are given consistent increases in VA's budget authorized by Congress to address these and related challenges. We believe more must be done to mitigate challenges veterans experience in accessing community care, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Notably, our constituents have encountered numerous difficulties with accessing VA community care, such as delays in receiving referrals and authorizations from the Department for private care, breakdowns in transferring health records between VA and private health care providers, and a lack of timely adjudication of claims from community providers. Therefore, we request that you answer the following questions related to community care:

- What modifications will be made to improve the complicated internal process for reviewing and authorizing referrals for veterans for specialty care outside of VA facilities?
- What actions is VA taking to improve the electronic transfer of medical records between VA and community providers?
- What modifications will be made to improve the VA Appeals Backlog specialty with the Board of the Veterans Appeals (BVA)? Will this include modifications to the Board's IT systems?
- What modifications will be made to decrease the rate at which community providers' claims are rejected or denied and improve the timeliness with which community providers receive reimbursement for treating veterans? Also, could VA or the third-party administrators that process claims from community providers modify or loosen any of their own internal administrative procedures to expedite the processing of claims?
- When will the modifications needed to mitigate the issues confronting veterans' community care take effect?

These stated challenges with VA community care will only grow as the Department and its community providers return to a pre-pandemic operating posture. It remains crucial for Congress and the Department to identify solutions to these challenges. It is the least we can do for those who have already given so much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "J. Luis Correa".

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J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Scott Peters".

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Scott Peters  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Katie Porter".

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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress